

Baca County, Colorado

Baca County (population 4,121) was created by the Colorado legislature on April 16, 1889, out of the eastern portions of Las Animas County. Home to Native American Nations of the Plains, Baca County has been mainly an agricultural area since its settlement by Europeans. The main industries in Baca County remain farming and cattle production, along with some small-scale hog and feedlot producers. The Depression and the Dust Bowl both had a devastating impact on this area. In response, Congress passed Public Law 46 in 1935, declaring soil and water conservation and wise land use a national policy. In an effort to stabilize the land, the federal government purchased large tracts that would become the Comanche National Grasslands, a landscape full of wildlife and historic resources that today forms the basis of Baca County's ecological and heritage tourism.

Today, Baca County celebrates several interesting archaeological sites through events such as the Spring and Fall Equinox Festivals in Springfield. The festivals are promoted by the Springfield Chamber of Commerce and other sponsors. Since 2005, with the advent of the Southeast Colorado Birding Trail, the county has reinvigorated its efforts to expand the program and increase participation in the festivals.

With support from the State Historical Fund and Colorado Preservation, Inc. Baca County has recently begun an assessment of historic properties throughout the county and completed an inventory of 64 New Deal-era resources in 2005. Dedicated local volunteers also mobilized to raise matching funds for a Colorado Historical Society grant to repair the roof of the county courthouse.

The county has partnered with five neighboring counties to form the Arkansas Valley Area Marketing Coalition, now known as the Southeast Colorado Regional Tourism Group, in order to develop as a regional heritage tourism destination. The Southeastern Plains have many historic assets telling the story of the evolution and development of America's southwest. The Santa Fe Trail Scenic and Historic Byway passes through the county and ties together many of these sites.